THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A number of steps for promoting bilateral trade and economic cooperation with Russian Federation have been taken by the Government which include:—

— promotion of dialogue with the Russian side including discussions at the highest level;

— constant review of bilateral trade through the Joint Commission mechanism with its Working Groups on Trade and Economic Cooperation and on Pharmaceuticals and Sub-group on Transport which meet separately at regular intervals;

facilitating through bilateral consultations, the rapid utilisation of debt owed to Russia in the form of export of goods;

— promotion of direct business contact through exchange of delegations, Joint Business Councils, holding of exhibition, participation in fairs, buyer seller meets, etc.

— promotion of consignment exports and ensuring greater presence of Indian banks.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) and (e) Government has also been making concerted efforts for agumenting bilateral trade between India and countries other than Russia. The important measures being taken in this regard include the following:—

— extension of mutual Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment;

— signing of Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement;

— signing of bilateral Investment Promotion Agreement;

— regular meeting of Inter-Governmental Commissions (IGC); and

— active and regular interaction between the members of trade and industry at the level of Joint Business Council (JBC).

(f) Does not arise.

Reservation of Posts for the Disabled

2430. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:
SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:

Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister affirmed the Government's commitment on reservation of posts for the disabled in his Independence Day speech on August 15, 1996;

(b) if so, how far the scheme has already been implemented indicating the percentage of posts already filled by disabled personnel in Central Government services and public sector undertakings;

(c) whether the scheme includes filling of such posts by persons suffering from maladies related with weakness of mind, but who, according the specialist doctors attending on them, can be helped to lead a life with dignity, by offering them suitable assignments; and

(d) if so, the steps taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA): (a) to (d) The Prime Minister in his Independence Day address inter-alia reaffirmed the Government's commitment to take steps to ensure that reservations in employment for disabled persons are uniformly implemented. Since the persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights & Full Participation) Act, 1995 which provides for statutory reservation of not less than 3% of jobs for disabled persons against identified posts has been enforced only w.e.f. 7th Feb. 1996, it is too early to assess the impact of reservation policy for the handicapped. Although there is

no reservation in jobs for mentally handicapped persons, rehabilitation measures have been taken for the mentally handicapped persons through the National Institute for the Mentally handicapped and through Non-Governmental Organisations receiving financial support from the Government under grant-in-aid schemes.

Waiving the ceiling on the eligibility for payment of bonus to Industrial Workers

2431. SHRI JIBON ROY: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether the ceiling on eligibility has been waived in the matter of payment of annual bonus to Central Government employees;

(b) whether Government are considering to waive the same for the industrial workers also;

(c) if so, the present status of the matter; and

(d) if not, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) Wage ceiling for Group 'C' & 'D' employee; of the Central Government has been removed for Payment of Ad-hoc Bonus for the year 1995-96.

(b) to (d) Wage ceiling for determining eligibility for bonus has been laid down under the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965. The ceiling was recently enhanced by amending this Act from Rs. 2500/—per month to Rs. 3500/—per month. No decision for amending the Act further has been taken so far.

Import of Coal by SAIL

2432. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) the amount spent by SAIL on indigenous and imported coal separately during the last three years, year-wise;

(b) whether SAIL imports coal from Australia at a much higher price then that available from Coal India Limited;

(c) if so the reasons therefor;

(d) whether CIL has recently hiked the price of its coal; and

(e) if so, the extent of restriction SAIL has imposed on purchase of coal from CIL and the extent to which that would put extra financial pressure on SAIL's import bill?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL & MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) The amount spent by SAIL on indigenous and imported coking coal including freight, taxes etc. during the last three years is:—

(Rs. is crores)

Year	Imported Coal	Indigenous Coal	Total
1993-94	1091.71	1095.88	2187.59
1994-95	1196.98	1161.36	2358.34
1995-96	1567.65	1164.35	2732.00

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) SAIL imports low ash metallurgical coking coal of prime quality as a qualitative and quantitative supplement to the indigenous coking coal to meet the total requirement of steel plants. The imported coal purchased by SAIL is also superior in quality as compared to indigenous coal in respect of ash percentage, from swelling index rank, etc.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) The consumption of indigenous and imported coal depends upon the inter play of certain factors such as relative